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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Recent Communist Logistical and Manpower  
Developments in Indochina*

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**Recent Communist Logistical  
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in Indochina**

17 April 1973

Amid indications that the Communists are preparing for an increase in fighting in South Vietnam's Military Region 1, logistical activity continued at a very fast pace this past week.

- A major logistical element in the Dong Hoi area of North Vietnam is transporting large quantities of rice, probably toward both southern Laos and South Vietnam.
- Southbound vehicle activity continues heavy through the Ban Karai Pass and reached a dry season peak west of the DMZ [redacted] Photography showed hundreds of vehicles moving on the main north-south roads through southern Laos.
- Within northern South Vietnam itself, there were indications in COMINT last week that the Communists have amassed very large concentrations of ordnance. There appears to be a heightened Communist concern that their logistical activities be masked from the ICCS inspection teams.

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The heavy pace of logistical activity was not matched on the manpower side this past week. Only two small groups of specialists started the infiltration trip south from North Vietnam. Moreover, there is tenuous evidence that two NVA infantry divisions in northern Military Region 1 – the 304th and the 312th – may be returning to North Vietnam. These moves together with the earlier deployment of the 308th represent a redeployment of some 20,000 men but still leave a force there equal to that which was in place at the beginning of the Communist 1972 Spring Offensive. -- about 60,000 troops.

Note: Comments and queries regarding this publication are welcomed. They may be directed to [redacted]

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## DISCUSSION

## Recent Communist Logistical Developments

*North Vietnam*

1. Occasionally very heavy logistical activity was again detected in southern North Vietnam, centering around Binh Tram 26 near Dong Hoi. On 10 April, for example, at least 72 vehicles passed through a vehicle checkpoint in the binh tram's area. Binh Tram 26 is looking to the future insofar as rice deliveries go. On 12 April an element referenced 2,200 tons of rice and 1,100 tons of unidentified supplies that were to be picked up. Moreover, the element was to inquire whether the plan for the purchase of an additional 4,400 tons of rice had been completed and whether adequate vehicles were available to move the supplies. If not, local help -- "the more, the better" -- was to be requested. In fact, some civilian labor is already being used in southern North Vietnam. Hanoi has reportedly transferred 1,000 personnel from Nghe An to Quang Binh Province to serve as port laborers. Although some complaints have been heard from elements of Binh Tram 26 concerning a shortage of petroleum, such difficulties are believed to be temporary and probably result from the sustained heavy activity there.

*Southern Laos and Cambodia*

2. Heavy Communist logistical activity continues to be reflected in areas contiguous to South Vietnam. [ ] a high level of supplies is continuing to move into Laos via the Ban Karai Pass and routes west of the DMZ. Southbound trucks detected on Route 912 south of Ban Karai averaged 40 per day for the period 9 to 15 April. West of the DMZ, [ ] highest number of trucks of the dry season on 11 April when 42 southbound movers were recorded.

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3. Continuing heavy vehicle activity in the Laotian Panhandle was detected in both aerial reconnaissance and COMINT. Photography [ ] for example, revealed 34 cargo trucks (23 moving south) on Route 92, near Muong Nong. Farther south, [ ] photography revealed a total of 259 cargo trucks moving south on Route 99 from Muong Nong to its intersection with Route 96. Heavy activity was also noted on Route 9211 northeast of Ban Phone. At least 70% of the trucks observed moving south in the Panhandle were loaded with supplies. Photography of the feeder routes from Laos into South Vietnam's MR 1 also showed heavy activity [ ] 49 trucks moving on routes east of Chavane toward South Vietnam were observed. COMINT

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[redacted]

corroborated the photographic evidence of sustained vehicle activity through central Laos. On 12 April, an element of Group 472 reported that 65 vehicles had been dispatched to an unknown location despite reportedly heavy rain in the area. Some of the vehicles noted moving in the Group 472 area on 10 April were towing 37-mm and 57-mm artillery pieces.

4. Some preparations for the forthcoming rainy season are being noted in COMINT. An element of the 34th Engineer Regiment (formerly Binh Tram 34) recently referenced a "plan for getting the vehicles through the rainy season." The regiment is preparing new storage facilities for the summer season.

5. In the Group 470 area of southern Laos and northeastern Cambodia, heavy vehicle activity and planned supply deliveries have been noted in COMINT. On 8 April, an element of Group 470 reported that it had received 44 vehicles that morning. The following day, 21 vehicles were noted being dispatched to a storage facility in the Binh Tram 37 area, and on 10 April an element of Group 470 reported that 46 vehicles, possibly including some artillery pieces, were on their way to an unspecified location. Inside Cambodia, Binh Tram 52 was instructed on 8 April to transport more than 200 tons of food and petroleum to a unit in its area.

6. Aerial reconnaissance [redacted] recently have provided a good reflection of the heavy resupply activity and large Communist presence in the border base areas surrounding Snuol and Mimot. North Vietnamese units - including tank patrols - have been assigned to protect supply lines between Kratie, Chup, and the Dambe area. Large amounts of supplies and heavy weapons reportedly are moving across the border into South Vietnam along these corridors (Routes 13, 7, and 75), not only through the legal entry point at Xa Mat (GVN Route Q-22), but also over a "secret," recently built road leading due south from Mimot. [redacted], some 70 North Vietnamese tanks were moved from Kratie Province into the Snuol area on 17 March.

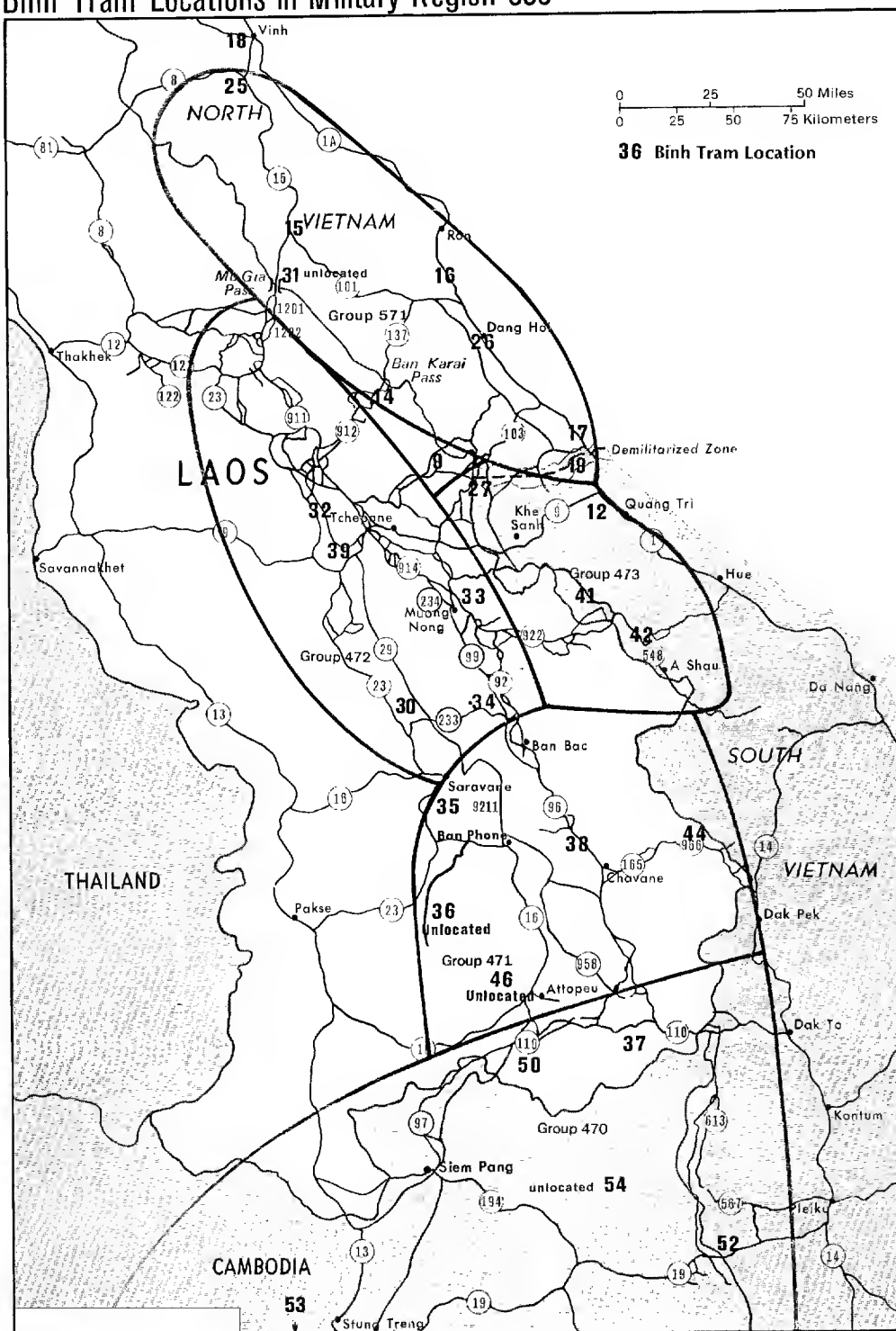
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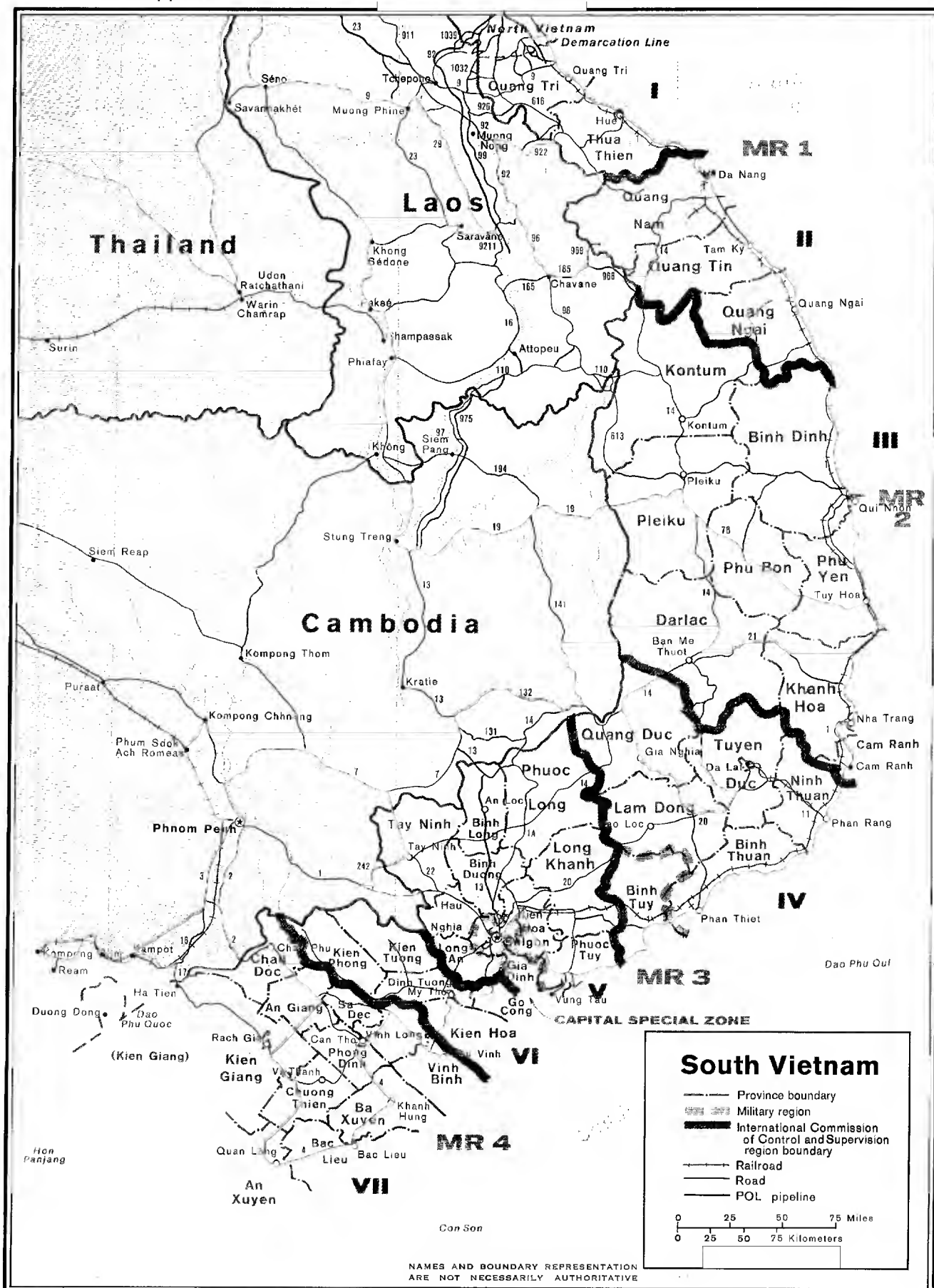
### *South Vietnam*

7. North Vietnamese forces in northern South Vietnam apparently are preparing to step up the scale of fighting, and Communist logistical activity in the area continues at a high pace. An obvious effort by the North Vietnamese to keep their high level of logistical activity undetected by the ICCS was reflected in enemy communications during the week. A message of 10 April noted that because the ICCS had been inspecting roads in the Quang Tri area one NVA element was unable to implement its plan to transport weapons. A second intercept the same day revealed that large numbers of NVA personnel were being assigned to the Cam Lo area to

# Binh Tram Locations in Military Region 559



Note: As indicated in the memorandum the North Vietnamese logistical network in MR 559 is currently undergoing a major reorganization. This map does not reflect such changes, and is intended only as a reference to the various binh trams' areas of operation prior to the recent changes. New maps will be prepared when our information on the new organization warrants.



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[redacted]

build a storage facility. ICCS teams were expected in the area and units were to disperse and camouflage cargo and to dress like civilians. The unit was told, "If the International Commission asks about the plane or the cargo, just tell them you don't know anything about it." On 12 April, NVA units were directed to treat the ICCS members well during their visit, but were instructed not to wear their insignias, and to camouflage cargo discreetly: "If any targets are discovered," an immediate report was to be made.

8. Most signs indicate that what is being hidden from the ICCS is a massive concentration of military supplies in northern South Vietnam. An element of Binh Tram 12 reported on 9 April that activity at a B-5 Front storage area (just south of the DMZ) was so hectic that vehicles could not be dispatched in a timely manner. And, on 15 April, a logistical element in Quang Tri Province indicated that nearly 6,000 tons of supplies -- almost all ordnance -- were remaining in storage. An element of Binh Tram 12 had 63 vehicles on the road on 12 April: at least some were to pick up ordnance to be transferred to an unspecified destination. The same day NVA elements in Quang Tri Province referenced the movement of eleven 37-mm and possibly some 57-mm antiaircraft weapons to new locations.

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10. Aerial photography also continues to show high levels of Communist logistic activity in northwestern Quang Tri Province. Between 60 and 100 trucks were seen daily along Route 9 from [redacted]. Roughly half of the vehicles observed were loaded. Activity also was sustained on Routes 6089 and 616 around Khe Sanh. On the latter route, 51 cargo vehicles were noted on [redacted] photography as were 31 57-mm antiaircraft pieces [redacted].

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11. The high pace of logistical activity in South Vietnam is not confined to Quang Tri Province. On 12 April, COMINT revealed that a "crash program" is under way in "B-4" (MR Tri-Thien-Hue) and in "B-1" (VC MR 5). Communications facilities were being upgraded along Routes 14 and 616 to "ensure a good command capability." To support these crash programs, logistical activity in the A Shau Valley continues at a high pace. New construction work on base areas inside the A Shau and in nearby Laos is under way, and aerial photography of Routes 547, 548,

and 616 continues to show high levels of vehicle activity. Tanks and artillery pieces have also been reported on Route 547, which leads east from A Shau. Farther south, Route 534, the main supply route to the NVA 711th Division, continues to receive heavy use, and there is some evidence that the Communists are planning to introduce, for the first time, 130-mm field guns to the southern Quang Tin area.

12. Recent reporting from MR 2 indicated that during March the Communists infiltrated substantial quantities of materiel into the B-3 Front from Laos and Cambodia. Among the reported deliveries were three 130-mm field guns and 11 tanks. These represent the first sightings of such equipment [redacted] in the forward areas of the B-3 Front. The 130-mm gun has not been extensively used in the B-3 Front, and these deployments will bolster the Communists' firepower there.

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13. Also in the B-3 Front, the Communists have recently set up new antiaircraft defenses along some major transportation routes from Cambodia into Kontum and Pleiku Provinces. Daily South Vietnamese overflights of the Route 19 road network into Pleiku Province during late March showed a continuing flow of trucks and men infiltrating the area. The Viet Cong in this region are also making a major effort to increase local food production. Reportedly, 80% of the VC local force units and cadre in Kontum Province have been ordered to report to Communist-held areas to aid in preparing rice fields.

14. In coastal Binh Dinh Province, recent intelligence indicates that as of 4 April North Vietnamese troops and military supplies were being secretly infiltrated by sea from Quang Tri Province to a landing point in Binh Dinh. Reportedly, supplies are offloaded from small boats at night and transferred to inland storage bases.

15. In southern South Vietnam the Communists have been upgrading a road leading south from Route 13 in southern Binh Long Province to facilitate the movement of weapons and ammunition to Communist units in northwestern Binh Duong Province. As of 30 March a VC engineering unit was reportedly reconstructing a bridge, and all bomb and artillery craters along the road were being filled to make the road passable to vehicle traffic. In Long An Province, rear services elements have revealed an urgent plan to transport various types of ammunition.

16. The Communists are also improving their "Sampan Alley" corridor from the Cambodian border area into Dinh Tuong Province in MR 4. [redacted] recent Communist attacks near the Mekong River were designed to draw the South Vietnamese away from this corridor while construction is under way. Canals along the route are to be deepened

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to allow the passage of sampans carrying loads up to six tons, loads considerably heavier than usual.

### *Northern Laos*

17. Recent photography has revealed the movement of large amounts of supplies into the Plaine des Jarres region and a continued upgrading of the route system there. The Ban Ban Valley storage area is the hub of the extremely high level of activity and large numbers of trucks are moving on routes to the west. Although the total quantity of supplies actually detected since the beginning of March amounts to only 500 tons, just before the cease-fire very large quantities of ordnance were moved into northern Laos. The current surge is believed to be the forward distribution of the earlier heavy deliveries. NVA elements have also been noted camouflaging and dispersing cargo to prevent its detection by aerial observers.

### **Recent Manpower Developments**

#### *Personnel Infiltration*

18. During the past week, four special-purpose infiltration groups were initially detected in the infiltration system. Two of the groups – with a combined strength of about 75 men – were noted in North Vietnam starting the trip south, while the two other groups were detected farther down the system in the Laotian Panhandle. The two groups detected in North Vietnam are the first special-purpose groups detected entering the infiltration pipeline since 27 March. No regular infiltration groups have been detected entering the system since 11 March. As shown in Table 1, the number of starts from 1 September 1972 to 15 April 1973 is substantially less than during the same period in the 1971/72 dry season. Table 2

**Table 1**

#### **Infiltration Starts by Season**

Destination	1 Sep 71 - 15 Apr 72	1 Sep 72 - 15 Apr 73
<b>Total</b>	<b>115,000</b>	<b>86,500</b>
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	17,000	26,000
MR 5	16,000	9,000
B-3 Front	30,000	14,000
COSVN	38,000	26,500
Southern Laos/MR 559	14,000	11,000

# Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

## South Vietnam

### Regular Combat Forces

VC/NVA <sup>1</sup>	RVNAF <sup>2</sup>	VC/NVA	RVNAF
153,000	287,000	76,000	85,000
		325th	VNMC
		324B	Airborne
		320B	1st
		312th	2nd
		304th	3rd
		711th	Regional
		2nd	Forces

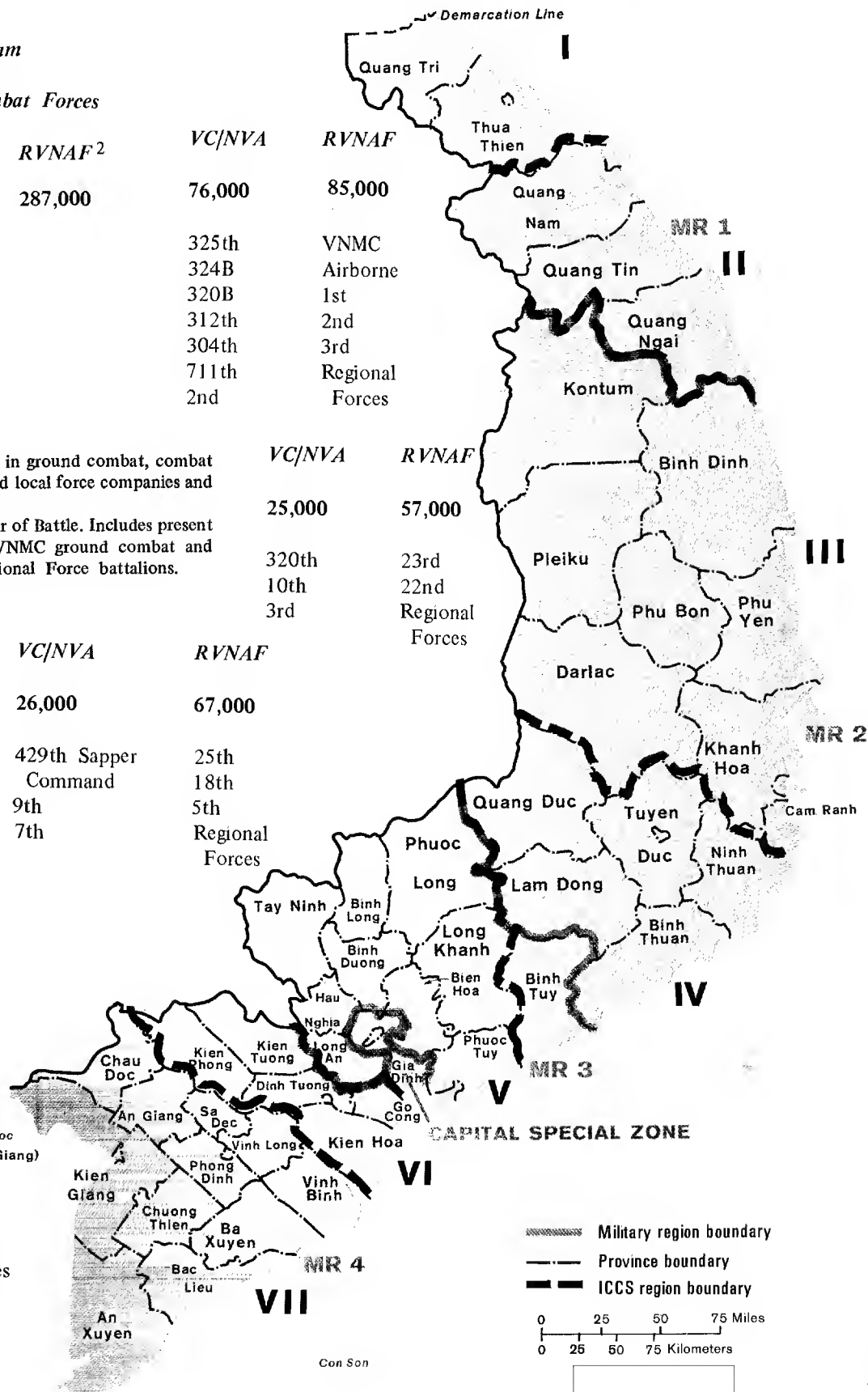
1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. Revised RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes present for duty personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions.

VC/NVA	RVNAF
25,000	57,000
320th	23rd
10th	22nd
3rd	Regional
	Forces

VC/NVA	RVNAF
26,000	67,000
429th Sapper	25th
Command	18th
9th	5th
7th	Regional
	Forces

VC/NVA	RVNAF
26,000	78,000
5th	21st
1st	9th
	7th
	44th Special
	Tactical Zone
	Regional Forces



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provides estimated starts of regular and special-purpose infiltration groups, by week, since 1 January for the current dry season. The latter estimate should be regarded as "soft" because precise data concerning the date of departure of many of the groups are not available.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Personnel Entering the Pipeline**  
**Since 1 January 1973**

	Total <sup>1</sup>	Special-Purpose <sup>2</sup>
1-7 Jan	4,700	400
8-14	3,700	350
15-21	6,100	500
22-28	4,000	150
29-4 Feb	6,300	400
5-11	3,100	250
12-18	2,000	850
19-25	500	500
26-4 Mar	750	750
5-11	1,300	300
12-18	125	125
19-25	600	600
26-1 Apr	200	200
2-8	0	0
9-15	75	75

1. Including gap-filled groups, except Groups 7001 through 7009. Assuming that these groups departed between 1 January and 10 March, some 4,500 combat troops would be spread over the departures estimated for those weeks.

2. Including those groups which were initially detected without a specific strength, but which have been assigned an average strength of 35.

19. Since the cease-fire, approximately 15,000 personnel are estimated to have started south, and almost all of these have now arrived at their destinations in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Those infiltrators that remain in the system are primarily stragglers from regular groups and personnel in special-purpose groups.

*Manpower Developments in South Vietnam*

20. Two NVA infantry divisions – the 304th and 312th – may be returning or have already returned to North Vietnam from Quang Tri Province.

21. Some elements of all three of the subordinate regiments of the 304th Division have been identified in North Vietnamese civil communications in southern North Vietnam since late January. In addition, around the beginning of April these regiments ceased communicating with the senior NVA tactical authority for northern South Vietnam. Other COMINT [redacted] however, indicates that at least some elements of the 304th Division were still in Quang Tri Province as of the first week of April.

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22. In the case of the 312th Division, recent changes in the communications patterns of the division indicate that it also could be in the process of leaving northern South Vietnam. There has been no reflection in COMINT of tactical activity in Quang Tri Province by subordinate elements of the division since early March, and they have not been noted in communications with the division headquarters or the senior tactical authority for the area since late March. Moreover, between 14 and 29 March, the division headquarters relocated from southwest of Quang Tri City to just north of the DMZ in North Vietnam.

23. The fact that the two divisions have not established command and control communications with any major headquarters in North Vietnam other than the High Command makes it impossible to judge whether the moves are permanent. They conceivably could be only temporary moves to rest and refit those elements and possibly allow the troops to visit families before rotating back into South Vietnam.

24. If the 304th and 312th Divisions are in fact leaving South Vietnam, they would be the second and third such units to do so in recent months. The NVA 308th Infantry Division\* with some 7,500 men returned north from Quang Tri Province earlier this year and is now located in the vicinity of Hanoi, the division's historical garrison area. The subsequent withdrawal of the 304th and 312th Divisions would reduce Communist combat forces in MR 1 by an additional 12,000 troops, but would still leave an NVA combat structure in MR 1 comparable to the level at the beginning of the 1972 Communist Spring Offensive.

\* Although the deployment of the 308th Division from Quang Tri Province began in early January, the unit probably did not complete its move until after the cease-fire.

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25. Photography [ ] reveals that, of the four NVA SA-2 firing battalions of the 263rd SAM Regiment in the Khe Sanh area, only one is still in place and the other three are currently unlocated. All four battalions were last photographed in place [ ] At one of the three presently unoccupied sites, the North Vietnamese apparently have set up dummy missiles and launchers. Moreover, the area around the three launch positions shows an absence of tracked vehicle activity normally associated with an occupied SAM site. The North Vietnamese also appear to have taken precautions to prevent entrance into the area by putting up barriers on the roads to the launch positions.

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26. There currently is no evidence to suggest that any of the four SA-2 firing battalions have left the immediate Khe Sanh area. The headquarters of the 263rd SAM Regiment, however, was noted in COMINT on 6 April planning to reposition its subordinate battalions, presumably still in the Khe Sanh area. Such a deployment would be in keeping with previously observed North Vietnamese policy of frequently shifting the positions of its SAM units when it is believed that their positions have been compromised.

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